

166 In one instance there had been intermarriage with Sinhalese,
 563 and we suspected this in other cases, though the majority appear to be reasonably pure-blooded.

361 These people make chenas¹ on which they live temporarily
 231 in bark-covered huts; Plate X, figure 1, represents the chena settlement of the local group of the Namadewa *waruge*, some of the members of which are shown in Plate X, figure 2. They gather honey and hunt, several of them possess guns, and some of them rear cattle for the Sinhalese villagers. Indeed, for
 [222] Veddas their lot is singularly happy, since they live in the heart
 224 of the park country where game is still abundant. Bailey first induced some Veddas in the Nilgala district to make chenas about the middle of the last century, before which all the Veddas in this district were probably living their natural hunting, honey-gathering life.

361 It is not often that a community that has taken to the semi-civilised life of chena cultivation is seen, in which its members
 511 are so healthy and well fed, for Veddas dislike settling down and do not generally do so until they find they can no longer subsist on the game in the country, when they either drift into Sinhalese settlements, or make extremely rough chenas for themselves, the produce of which is seldom sufficient to feed the community. Besides which, as is the case with the Sinhalese peasants themselves, the crop is often pledged to Moormen pedlars before it is reaped. The poor Veddas then subsist
 [164] as best they can on yams, honey and berries, and usually fall a prey to fever. Several Veddas in this wretched condition were seen between Namal Oya and Bandaraduwa, while those at Godatalawa were scarcely better off.

In the Nilgala district the conditions are different. Chena making and cattle rearing had been introduced while game was still abundant, families are still able to leave the chena settlement and hunt and gather honey, living during such times in rock shelters within their own hunting boundary. However, the

¹ Bailey defines a chena as "a patch of ground cleared from the forest for cultivation. The jungle is burnt down, a crop taken off, and then suffered to grow up again: it is recleared again after intervals of from five to ten years," *Trans. Ethnol. Soc. N.S.* Vol. 11, 1863, p. 281.

582 Since the children of two brothers or two sisters cannot
601 marry each other, they are not *kurra* and *naena* but call each other "brothers" and "sisters," using the terms for elder or younger brother or sister according to their age¹.

621 (Every Vedda so readily helps all the other members of his
● 224 community and shares any game he may kill or honey he may
606 take in so liberal a manner that at first it was difficult to determine who were the individuals who had a special claim on others of the group. Certainly at first sight it seemed as if all game were equally divided among the members of the group, but after a little time we perceived that while an unmarried man looked especially after his mother, a married man's father-in-law had at least an equal claim on his son-in-law and in practice often received more attention, since a man generally spent most of his time with his wife's family.) That the relationship between
606 father-in-law and son-in-law is very close was shown in a number of ways, thus, when discussing children and their bringing up with Handuna of Sitala Wanniya, we asked him whether Veddas preferred to have a son or a daughter, the answer was prompt
[842] and decided, "a daughter, for thus a man obtains a son-in-law"; and on another occasion when discussing relationship he stated very decidedly, *amma mama ekai*, mother and mother's brother (i.e. father-in-law) are alike, and pointed out that as a man treats

¹ It may be worth while to say something concerning the alleged intermarriage of brother and sister among the Veddas, since Bailey and Hartshorne believed that such marriages occurred, and the Sarasins considered further investigation advisable. Our conclusions agree so thoroughly with Nevill's that we feel that we need do no more than quote what he has written on this subject. "Much nonsense has been written by persons who ought to have known better, about marriage of Vaeddias with their sisters. Such incest never was allowed, and never could be, while the Vaedda customs lingered. Incest is regarded as worse than murder. So positive is this feeling, that the Tamils have based a legend upon the instant murder of his sister, by a Vaedda to whom she had made undue advances. The mistake arose from crass ignorance of Vaedda usages. The title of cousin with whom marriages ought to be contracted, that is, mother's brother's daughter, or father's sister's daughter, is *naga* or *nangi*. This in Sinhalese is applied to a younger sister. Hence if you ask a Vaedda, 'Do you marry your sisters?' the Sinhalese interpreter is apt to say, 'do you marry your naga?' The reply is (I have often tested it), 'yes—we always did formerly, but now it is not always observed.' You say then, 'What? marry your own sister naga?' and the reply is an angry and insulted denial, the very question appearing a gross insult; and if put by a Sinhalese, the Vaedda would probably not even reply to him, but turn away with a gesture of contempt." *Taprobanian*, Vol. 1, 1886, p. 178.

PROPERTY AND INHERITANCE

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Nevill has pointed out that besides the territory of the group which is common land, every Vedda has "within this...a subdivision of his own which compares with the manor." In this he is no doubt right, though it was only at Sitala Wanniya that we were able to trace even approximately the hunting grounds belonging to individuals, which are theirs for the whole of their life, and descend to their heirs unless voluntarily alienated with the full consent of the group. So well is private ownership in a portion of land belonging to the group recognised in this community, that a man would not hunt even on his brother's land without the latter's permission; and if game started and wounded on his own land were killed on another man's domain, the man on whose territory the animal died would be given a portion of the flesh, apparently that side of the animal which touched the ground as the animal lay dead. Among other Veddas it was said half, or more generally a quarter, of the animal belonged to the man on whose land it died.

At Sitala Wanniya we not only found particular hills regarded as the property of individuals, but besides the big cave Pihilegodagalge, which was the property of the whole group of five families, there were smaller caves which were the property of the heads of individual families to which no others would have been welcomed, even had they thought of intruding. An exception was, however, made in the case of a man's *baena* (son-in-law), who we were told would naturally come and go as he pleased.

As has been shown in the chapter on Family Life, presents are often given at marriage, and these may take the form of personal property or hills or pools. In this section we shall deal with such transfers of real property, which in normal circumstances were made only to children and sons-in-law, and even then were not made over without the assent of every adult male member of the group. As this difficult subject does not lend itself to a general description, we shall limit ourselves to giving actual instances of land transfer with which we became acquainted.

When Vela of Sitala Wanniya married a woman of Bingoda his father-in-law gave him a piece of land in Marniya *pangua*

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776 At Sitala Wanniya the principal *yaku* are Kande Yaka,
 773 Bilindi Yaka, Bambura Yaka and the *Nas Yaku*. According
 to these people Kande Wanniya killed his younger brother
 Bilindi when the latter was only an infant. The story is that
 their parents were out hunting when Bilindi, feeling hungry,
 began to cry and would not desist in spite of the endearments
 lavished upon him by Kande. At last Kande threw the child
 on the ground in despair and so killed him.

776 It appeared that as a hunting hero Bambura Yaka is on the
 whole as important as Kande Yaka, though he is certainly not
 looked upon as so benevolent nor so loved as the latter, who
 helps men to kill deer and never sends sickness. Bambura
 Yaka is a somewhat grim spirit who although he gives yams
 and helps men to kill pig, also sends sickness and must be
 invoked to remove it, and he is also invoked when dogs are
 lost or taken by leopards. Because of his giving yams he is
 sometimes known as Ale (yam) Yaka, and yams are offered
 to him together with other vegetable food when this can be
 obtained.

• 224 The *kirikoraha* ceremony is performed to obtain game, in
 776 gratitude for which the head and a portion of the flesh from
 762 the breast of every deer killed is cooked as an offering to Kande
 Yaka and is afterwards eaten by the community. If this were
 not done Kande Yaka would be angry and little game would be
 killed.

The *kirikoraha* seen at Sitala Wanniya is described on
 pp. 223 to 226, and the ceremony at which Bambura Yaka is
 invoked on pp. 237 to 245.

775 The spirits of the dead become the *Nas Yaku* and with
 782 Kande Yaka are invoked for success in hunting; a description
 769 of this ceremony will be found on pp. 230 to 233. A few days
 after a death the dead man is invoked for assistance in hunting,
 being addressed as *mal paenae wanna*, and when the relatives or
 the group leave the cave to look for game they repeat the
 invocation as they move along. After this, if they are successful,
 they know that the spirit of the dead man has become powerful
 as a *Nas Yaku* and invoke him at the *kirikoraha* among the
Nas Yaku called upon. The *Nas Yaku* must obtain permission

RELIGION

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Mangara Deyo is invoked to protect cattle. About a month before our visit a nephew of the shaman suffered from headache and fever and woke up in the middle of the night in a great state of alarm. It was ascertained by stone augury that Mangara Deyo had sent the sickness, offerings were made to him, and the youngster speedily recovered. 776 755

There are no dances at a man's death or invocations to the spirits of the dead, nor did there appear to be any particular spirit who gave luck in hunting, indeed it seemed that game was little sought, the whole activity of the community being concentrated on cattle breeding. 731 776 769

The temple of Mangara Deyo is a small bare hut, with the roof projecting a few feet beyond that wall in which the door is cut. The inside of the temple is quite bare except for a narrow wooden rack about a foot wide which runs round the two side and back walls at a height of about four feet from the ground. In one corner of this was a pile of *ande* of all shapes and sizes which were said to belong to Mangara Deyo. 778 346

ROTAWAEWA.

Mr G. W. Jayawardene writes as follows concerning the beliefs of the Tamankaduwa "Veddas" described on p. 36. "They regard Adukganna Hulawali Yaka and Vedi Yaka as the important *yaku*. Adukganna Hulawali Yaka is the spirit to whom they look to be cured of sickness. When any one is ill he or she or someone on their behalf puts aside one or two cents which are wrapped in a clean piece of cloth and from each house an offering of food is made. Vedi Yaka is the spirit they look to for help in getting game. When an animal is killed the heart is taken and roasted and offered on a stick with the end split into four to hold the heart under a tree." Commenting on this Mr B. Horsburgh writes, "Adukganna Hulawali Yaka is the spirit of a Vedda who was killed by King Mahasena for refusing to leave Minneriya tank when he was going to restore it. The name Adukganna Hulawaliyaka means Hulawali Yaka who takes the *adukkuwa* or present of food (from the offering made to him). He is only seen in dreams, 776 753 776 224 776 775 787

MAGIC

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of the Sinhalese. I do not understand *taekae*, there may have been some mistake in writing down the charm."

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CHARMS TO OBTAIN FOOD.

Neither amulets nor verbal formulae are used to insure straight shooting or the killing of deer or sambar, the two animals providing the greater part of the flesh consumed by the Veddas; nor are there amulets or charms to obtain success in pig hunting. Doubtless this is because the *yaku* when properly invoked give success in these matters. There are, however, no *yaku* whose special business it is to give success in the monkey drives which are, or were until recently, practised, and we found that certain formulae were sung by the members of the driving party, and in some case muttered by the men who waited in ambush for the monkeys to be driven to them. And we were told that the singing or reciting of these formulae was necessary to the success of the drive.

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Mr Parker uses the diminutive "doggie" in the translations of the two following charms collected at Bandaraduwa in order to retain the sense of the originals, which clearly indicates that the reciter is speaking coaxingly to the monkeys. The words of the charm are literally "dog" and "bitch," the use of which in the translation would give a wrong impression. In one charm the hunters call the monkeys to them assuring them that they are quite safe, for certainly they cannot shoot them.

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Charm sung while driving Wandura monkeys (Bandaraduwa).

Amma maya na kolandant
Kolandan handa pita yanni
Eki kiya innu kato,
Eki awala yandama yanni.
"Taek, taek," kiya wera balla.
"Kik, kik," kiya wera basit.
Nawini nagan handa pita,
Eki dunna widala kadoyi
Eki yandama yandama yanni.
Keliya keliya wera balla,
Keli madalagena duwagena wera.
Mother mine, the leaf-clad chief,
Pops behind a leafy trunk;

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Tells another who is there;
She, excited, runs away.
"Taek, taek," crying, doggie come;
"Kik, kik," crying, doggie come.
In the Na-tree forest hid,
Safe behind a banyan trunk,
With a bow she can't be shot,
Setting off to go, to go.
Playing, playing, doggie come.
Stop your games and running come.

Charm sung while driving Rilawa monkeys (Bandaraduwa).

Ammā māyi nā rāsāt
Rāan handē piṭa yannē
"Rā, Rā" kiyala wāren balla.
Burutak handē piṭa yannā.
Keliyē keliyāṭa duwagana wāre,
Keli mādalāgana duwagana wāre.
Mother mine, the lovely chief,
Pops behind a cotton trunk,
"Ro, Ro" crying, doggie come.
Behind a satin stem she goes.
Playing, playing, running come;
Stop your games and running come.

The Sinhalese heading of this charm, collected at Henebedda (where it was dictated by Poromala of Bingoda) runs *Wanduraṅ nawa tanaka wiya*, the translation of which is "said at a place where *wandura* stay."

Ātu surā damannē
Ō man handēṭa pāninnē.
"Ah, Oh," kiyā wāre nam
Kola surā damannē,
Mā man handē naṭannē.
Bala siṭṭa aeyi dennā?

The branches they scratch off and throw down,
They spring on to that trunk (?).
Come, indeed, saying "Ah, Oh."
They scratch off and throw down the leaves.
They dance on this trunk (?).
Why did they stop and look, both of them?

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We could find no trace of any ceremony having for its object the control of the supply of game and honey or the increase of the number of yams and edible berries. It is assumed that

THE AVANA CEREMONY,

796 The *avana* ceremony which we saw at Henebedda may be described here. Mr Bibile told us that he had heard of it having been performed in his father's time by Sinhalese in the neighbourhood of Bibile, and the former Korala of Bakiella in the Eastern Province, a man particularly versed in magic and spiritual matters, knew all about this custom, while on the other hand many Veddass did not know of it. Our impression is that we are here dealing with an original Vedda custom, consisting of an offering of part of the game killed, which has been modified by the peasant Sinhalese of the Vedda country, and again adopted from them in its modified form by the Veddass.

796 The following account of the *avana* custom records what we actually saw done on the night of February 7th, at Henebedda
 • 224 on the occasion of the death of a fine buck. The stag, which
 782 had been shot a short distance from Bendiyagalge caves, was carried to a convenient slab of rock between our camp and the caves and there cut up, an arrow being most skilfully used to skin and disjoint the animal; the throat was opened low down in the front of the neck, one or more big veins being severed, and three double handfuls of blood were smeared upon a heap of *mora* leaves which had previously been laid on a rock. Then six long narrow pieces of muscle called *anda malu* (eel flesh, because the strips of muscle are long like eels) were cut from the root of the neck as well as two morsels from the tongue, the nostril and the ears. These twelve pieces of meat, constituting
 796 the offering called *avana*, were put on the blood-smeared leaves
 782 for the Kadawara Yaku, who were said to be the spirits of eleven
 773 Veddass who were named and described as follows:

Avana Vedda, the first Vedda who instituted the rite.
 Lē Vedda, the first man who smeared blood on the heap of leaves.

Mas Vedda, the first man who laid meat upon the heap of leaves.

Buta Vedda, the *yaka* of the Vedda who sent the animal whose blood and flesh were used at the first *avana* ceremony.

Atu Holaman Vedda, the *yaka* who makes noises in the

INVOCATIONS

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The sky is becoming purple, O thou Friend!
 The earth is becoming purple, O thou Friend!
 Blows even the wind also, O thou Friend!
 Even the small birds are flying also, O thou Friend!
 From behind the yellow sun, draw, draw the sun's rays.
 What is the (reason of the) delay, Chief Ntā?
 Shall I look, shall I look if a small heifer has stopped in the herd?
 (that is, is in the herd).
 Even a small heifer is not in the herd, O thou Friend!
 Shall I look if a large heifer has stopped in the herd, O thou Friend?
 A large heifer is also not in the herd, O thou Friend!
 Should he take the bow, he is able to shoot well, the Panikkiya.
 Should he take the cudgel, he is good at stopping (the buffaloes), the
 Panikkiya.
 Should he take the noose, he is able to tie well, the Panikkiya.
 Today he will come here, the speckled Panikkiya.

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INVOCATIONS TO KANDE YAKA AND BILINDI YAKA.

With a single exception (No. XXIII) all these invocations are recited in order to procure game. No. xv was sung whilst dancing round an arrow struck in the ground as is described in Chapter IX.

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The remainder (with the exception of No. XXIII already noted) are sung at the *kirikoraha* ceremony. Although the invocations used at the *kirikoraha* ceremony present almost every stage of development, and some invocations such as Nos. XVIII and XXII are obviously composed of fragments belonging to different strata of belief, in every case the *yaku* called upon are the spirits of Kande Wanniya and his brother Bilindi.

No. XXIII is especially interesting, as it shows that such powerful foreign spirits as Riri Yaka and Indigollae Yaka when adopted into the Vedda system assumed Vedda characteristics, and so became subject to Kande Yaka.

Bandaraduwa.

- XV. *Kandi sifa Kandakapā nā hola andan*
Bā hola andan-ttala tana
Sonda sonda gal gawarungi piyen piyana
Ōy yannā maya kandi mul pola Wanniya.

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It appears that painted and lacquered arrows were sometimes presented to the Veddas by the Sinhalese kings as signs of gratitude or favour, just as ceremonial forms of other objects were presented to particular Sinhalese¹. Dr Willey told me of a lacquered bow and arrow which he heard of among a community of sophisticated Veddas, and which he was told ultimately found their way to the Kandy Museum. Among the peasant Sinhalese of Nilgala we heard of a lacquered arrow—said to have been lost recently—which, according to tradition, had been presented many generations ago to the Vedda ancestors of its last owner by one of the kings of Ceylon. With regard to the specimen in the Kandy Museum, the arrow is feathered in the usual Vedda style, the condition of the lacquer on it shows that it is of considerable age. The iron which is said to belong to it is loose, and it is entirely unlike any arrow head we have seen. Instead of having a tang it has a socket into which the end of the shaft must have fitted, and there is a shoulder or "stop" upon the iron. The bow shown us as having been acquired with the arrow was in much better condition and had a small band of silver or some metal resembling silver round it. According to the account given at the museum both specimens were procured from a priest who gave a history of the specimens which does not connect them with any Veddas².

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177 Traps and snares are unknown among the least sophisticated Veddas, but at Danigala we saw a small deadfall trap avowedly introduced.

HONEY.

222 The importance of honey in the Vedda diet has been mentioned in Chapter IV as well as the large part it plays in barter. The honey of the *bambara* (*Apis indica*) is taken in June and July, though at other times of the year small combs are taken

¹ There is in the Colombo Museum a beautifully lacquered weaver's shuttle, presented to certain cloth makers by one of the Sinhalese kings.

² It was stated that the bow and arrow had been found in the verandah of a disused house with some broken articles said to have been thrown there, having been taken from the *walawwa* (house) of Molligoda Adigar. The house was in the Kegalle district. The villagers gave the bow and arrow to a priest who brought them to the museum.

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caloa and Badulla. The largest Veddah population is in the former district, and these are they of whom Tennent principally writes, but they are by no means the wildest specimens of the race. They have not maintained so complete an isolation from other races as those I am about to describe, and consequently are not worthy of the same attention.* [131] [177] [134]

It is the "Wilder Sort" of Veddahs, as Knox calls them, of whom I desire to place on record an accurate description, before they quite pass away and are forgotten.

They roam about through the park-like district of Nilgala, which presents, of its kind, perhaps the loveliest scenery in this beautiful island, and wander among the forests of Bintenne—that "Land of Bintan all covered with mighty woods and filled with abundance of deer", where Knox tells us these dreaded "Wild Men" dwelt. [137] [136]

It would be difficult to conceive more barbarous types of the human race than they present. Yet there are degrees even in their barbarism, for those of Nilgala are wilder than their brethren of Bintenne. They are fewer in number, and more diminutive in stature. They are distributed through their lovely country in small septs, or families, occupying generally caves in the rocks, though some have little bark huts. They depend almost solely on hunting for their support,† and hold little communication even with each other. 184 361 342 224

Few in number as they are,—they did not exceed seventy-two persons in 1858,—still no other human beings are to be found for many miles round their habitations, and this seclusion has caused them to retain peculiarities which are fast disappearing, or have already disappeared from among even the wildest of Bintenne.‡ 161

There, there are both wild and settled Veddahs. Of the latter 177

* See Tennent's remarks on the late Mr. Atherton's praiseworthy and successful labours in civilizing the Veddahs of the Batticaloa district, where there are now only some two hundred and fifty who, having resisted all his efforts to improve them, still live in caves near the rock called Gunner's Quoin, and in Palla Palata of the Batticaloa Bintenna. I have been in communication with Mr. Birch, the present agent for government in that district, and, from specimens of their *patois* which he sent me, and which greatly resembles the Singhalese usually spoken, in those very words in which, in the Badulla district, the Veddah dialect differs from it, I am justified in describing them as having had, in some period of their history, more intercourse with the Singhalese than those of whom I am writing.

† Solely till 1855, when I succeeded in inducing them to turn their attention to cultivation; but they much prefer their own wild life, and their cultivation is very limited. [177]

‡ In using the term Bintenne, I refer to that portion of the division of Bintenne which belongs to the Badulla district. A larger portion of the same division is in Batticaloa.

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- 177 I shall say nothing, for they have long associated, although they have not yet intermarried, with the neighbouring Singhaless. The former resemble those of Nilgala. If they are less wild, it is but a shade less wild, almost too slight to be called more civilized.
- [36] They, in like manner, are distributed in small tribes or families.
- [34] They live in huts formed of boughs and bark, not so much from any advance in civilization, as from the dearth of rock caves, which abound in Nilgala; but they, too, become Troglodytes in wet weather. They cultivate small patches of chena,* but their chief source of livelihood is the produce of the chase, and honey; and they move about from forest to forest, guided by the blossoming of the flowers, in search of bees and game. Their number in 1856 was 364, but some of these even were much more wild than others.

- Both Nilgala and Bintenne Veddahs regard, for each tribe, particular tracts of country as their own, and are, as Knox tells us, careful not to trespass over each other's bounds, and they observe the custom, still prevalent among Kandyans, which entitles the lord of the soil to a portion of the game killed upon it.†

- In my description of the wild Veddahs of Nilgala, and those of Bintenne, it is well to bear in mind that, though they are not fifty miles apart, there is no communication whatever between them. No individual Veddah of the one district ever saw one of the other. They are entirely distinct; but distinct only in geographical position. They have inherited the same customs, superstitions, names, and dialect.‡

- In appearance, the Veddahs differ materially from the Singhaless. They are smaller in every respect, and rather darker, or, more properly, more dusky in complexion. They are short, slightly built, yet very active. Though far from being muscular, their limbs are firmly knit together, and they are athletic and capable of enduring great fatigue. Though spare, they are generally in very fair condition, and look more healthy than many of the Singhaless in the adjoining districts.§

- 141 The tallest Veddah I ever saw, a man so towering above his

* A "chena" is a patch of ground cleared from the forest for cultivation. The jungle is burnt down, a crop taken off, and then suffered to grow up again. It is recleared again after intervals of from five to ten years.

† This custom is called gang-gâté, lit. village hind leg; "gama" would be better translated "township", as it signifies a tract of ground within certain limits. The lord of the soil claims the "hind leg" of any deer, etc., killed within his bounds.

‡ The Veddahs of the Badulla Bintenne appear a distinct sept; those of Nilgala are connected with a Veddah family living just across the Batticalao boundary, close to which their country lies.

§ I use the term "Singhaless" and "Kandyan" in distinction from "Veddah."

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439 now, nor have they been for very long, so shy as to be prevented from bartering freely enough with the Singhalese, although, unless for the purpose of barter, they avoid intercourse with strangers. Their wants, however, are so few, that they rarely emerge from their forests.

● 224 They have the reputation of being expert with bow and arrow, and as it is only the larger game, such as elk, deer, etc., which 411 they pursue, it is very probable that with their remarkable power of creeping stealthily through the jungle, they may be able to come upon their prey unawares and do execution. But 411 they are miserable shots at a mark. I never saw more than two decent hits made at several small "archery meetings," which I have, from time to time, got up for my own amusement and their pecuniary advantage. And with regard to the latter, I must confess that I never saw that contempt for money which Tennent [177] supposes is still existing.*

The practice of drawing the bow with the feet to which Tennent also alludes as still in use, has so long ceased, that in all my inquiries—and I was very particular on this point—I could not find a single Veddah who ever witnessed it, but it is undoubted that such a mode of archery once existed, as is traditional among them.†

224 They have dogs perfectly trained to follow up and pull down 231 the wounded deer. These they value highly; but they are of no distinct breed and do not differ from the ordinary country dogs. But it would appear that at a time when hunting was of more importance to them than it is now, the dog was more valued. Knox tells us, that dogs were given "for portions with their daughters in marriage;"‡ and Percival relates, that "before the last war broke out between us and Holland, a Dutch officer sold a couple of Veddah dogs at Surat, for 400 rix dollars, about £30."§

them not, they will do him a mischief one time or another by shooting in the night. If the smith make the arrows, he leaves them in the same place where the Veddahs hung the flesh." Knox, part iii, chap. i, p. 62. *Vide* Tennent; vol. ii, part ix, chap. iii, p. 440, and note; also vol. i, part. v, chap. ii, p. 568, 2nd edition.

‡ "Money to them is worthless." *Vide* Tennent, vol. ii, part ix, chap. iii, p. 440, 2nd edit. I had been told that they would refuse silver, not knowing what it was, and would accept copper. But I never had a rupee refused when I tendered it; and the word "rupee" is by no means unintelligible to them. A good many years ago, I can well believe money was worthless to them, but that was long before Tennent's time.

† Tennent, vol. ii, part iv, chap. iii, p. 439. Some wild Veddahs of the Batticaloa district shewed Mr. Birch, when making some inquiries among them at my request, how the bow was drawn with the foot, but said it was never so drawn now.

‡ Knox, part iii, chap. i.

§ Percival, chap. xiii.

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262 bears, leopards, and jackals; and all birds, except the wild or domestic fowl. They will not touch lizards, bats, or snakes.*

They can assign no reason for their abstinence from the flesh of those beasts and birds which I have enumerated, but their objection to beef and fowls, though quite unexplained is decidedly the most marked, so much so that during my inquiries, I found that they spontaneously expressed their antipathy, though it required cross-examination to elicit the fact that they also avoid the other kinds of flesh.

They do not scruple to eat animals which have died a natural death, and have (in common with the Kandyan) a decided preference for their game "high"—if so mild a term can describe the exceedingly advanced condition, in which venison should be to suit the palate of a Veddah (or Kandyan) epicure.

226 They are fond of fish, which they catch by mixing with the water the juice of particular fruits and barks of trees, which stupify them. A similar practice is common among the Singhalese.

● 224 Their arrows procure for them the flesh of the animals they eat, and I can find no trace of pit-falls or traps being in use among 23/ them. In Bintenne, some of them employ the hunting buffalo to enable them to approach their game unseen.† Their dogs track out the wounded animals, and are also trained to catch the iguano,

223 Tennent is wrong in saying that they procure birds with the bow. They are not good enough shots for that. They catch them with bird-lime, made from the juice of the bo-tree (*ficus* [824] *religiosa*)—and also watch them to their nests, and take them at night. Their skill as marksmen is most indifferent, and they never exercise it at small objects.

224 The most choice food, in their estimation, is, of land animals, the flesh of the pengolin, or of the iguano; and, of fish, the eel. [262] Though they eat no part of the elephant, yet he is the object of their pursuit, both for their own protection and on account of [439] the ivory, so valuable to them as an article of barter. They will steal up to an elephant, and, as he is in the act of stepping for-

* It is curious that, while in the Batticaloa district Veddahs are said to eat bats, those of the Badulla district—certainly of Nilgala—reject them.

† The use of the hunting buffalo is common all over the island. The manner in which the animal is trained is curious. When its horns are young and tender, a string is tied tightly round the base of one of them. The pain thus produced is so acute, that the poor animal is easily guided by the cord, and answers to the slightest touch. The ligature is gradually relaxed; and, when the buffalo is full grown, the recollection of the pain it occasioned is so vivid that he will answer readily to a thin string tied loosely to his horn. With an animal so trained, the hunter can easily approach the deer unseen at night. The buffalo feeds; the hunter crouches under his lee; a touch will guide him, and the hunter advances under cover.

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ward, shoot their long-bladed arrows in the soft fleshy part under the forearm, and so disable him.* 224 ●

They have a great dread of meeting elephants at night, and have charms to protect them from them—not only to turn them from their path, but to render innoxious the bear, the leopard, and the wild boar. And I must here record, that they are the only charms I have entire faith in. 825 789

I never shall forget the first time one of these Veddah charms was recited for my edification. It was midnight; I was in the heart of a dense and gloomy forest, twenty miles from any habitation. The moon had not quite risen, and the stems of the trees and the gigantic pendent creepers were flickering in the uncertain light cast by the torches, which my Veddah guides, gliding through the forest, bore before me. I was chatting to an intelligent Veddah by my side and then learnt for the first time, that they had charms, having been till then, like Tennent, ignorant of the fact.† I begged him to recite one—and, in an instant, the forest re-echoed with such unearthly yells, that I felt he would be a bold bear indeed, whose heart did not die within him, and whose legs did not carry him far out of hearing of the repeated and discordant “behegang! wi-roo-wee! wi-roo-wah!” which formed the burden of the charm. Of its perfect efficacy, my friend had no doubt; nor indeed had I, but he was rather huffed when I suggested that the mere noise may have had something to do with its success.‡

Honey, and the grub in the comb, before it becomes the bee, are both staple food with the Veddahs, and their acuteness in discovering hives, when bee-hunting, is very remarkable. I have seen a Veddah stealing through the forest, suddenly stop—listen for an instant with uplifted hand—dart off into the jungle and return in an incredibly short space of time with a fresh honey-comb; while I have been in vain endeavouring 222 (262)

* This fact I established beyond a doubt. I questioned many Veddahs on that practice, which Knox treats as a fable, p. 63, viz., striking an axe into the sole of an elephant's foot; and I was assured by several that, though they never practise it themselves, the Veddahs of Batticaloa do, and that they even hamstring elephants. To those who know the pluck and dexterity of the professed elephant catchers in the north of the island, there is nothing extraordinary or incredible in a Veddah approaching sufficiently close to an elephant to wound his foot or to hamstring him. But I have inquired, and cannot satisfactorily establish the truth of the statement; and I confess that I am inclined to doubt their physical power to do either.

† Tennent, vol. ii, part ix, chap. iii, p. 448, 2nd edit.

‡ Tennent, vol. i, part ii, chap. i, p. 139, gives a lamentable account of the inefficacy of a charm for bears. I dare say the unhappy moorman there mentioned would have been more fortunate had he known the Veddah charm. The Singhalese have charms for the same purpose; but they differ from those of the Veddahs. (171)

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776
[539]

"My departed one, my departed one, my God!
Where art thou wandering!"*

The spirit of the dead is here simply called upon, without even the object for which it is invoked being mentioned. And this invocation appears to be used on all occasions when the intervention of the guardian spirits is required, in sickness, preparatory to hunting, etc.†

[224]

Sometimes, in the latter case, a portion of the flesh of the game is promised as a votive offering, in the event of the chase being successful; and they believe that the spirits will appear to them in dreams and tell them where to hunt.

Sometimes they cook food and place it in the dry bed of a river, or some other secluded spot, and then call on their deceased ancestors by name. "Come, and partake of this! Give us maintenance as you did when living! Come, wheresoever you may be; on a tree, on a rock, in the forest, come!" And they dance round the food, half chanting, half shouting, the invocation.‡

776 They have no knowledge of a Supreme Being. "Is he on a
782 rock? On a white ant-hill? On a tree? I never saw a God!"
was the only reply I received to repeated questions. § They have

* I find in my notes another version of this invocation, which slightly alters the first words. It runs thus: "Ma min!, ma min!—my gem, my gem!" but "miya," which signifies "dead," is the most common. The word in the invocation translated "God" is evidently a corruption of the Sanskrit *dama*, a god or divinity. EDIT.]

† And they are invoked without any ceremony at all—by a mere mental ejaculation. I once saw a Veddah make a bad shot, and he threw down his bow with a gesture of impatience, saying—"That was because I did not call on my Billindoo Yakkoon." And before making his next shot, he muttered an invocation.

‡ A superstition similar somewhat to this is prevalent among the neighbouring Singhaloes. If a man die who has lived a good life, his relatives give alms to the poor, calling on the dead by name to look down on them, and enable them to follow his good example. If he has lived an evil life, alms are also given; but these are propitiatory offerings for his sins, and to avert his evil influence from his survivors. For, in this case, he has become an evil spirit, apt to injure his own family and their cattle unless civilly treated. The degree of malignity depends on the degree of evil in the life led by deceased. If he dies with a hankering after worldly things, he haunts the house in which he lived in a variety of forms—perhaps most commonly that of a toad or a cobra, probably because these frequent houses. It is also, in some parts, a common belief that if a man die, and shortly after one of the family fall sick, and is not cured by the usual medicines and ceremonies, the sickness is attributed to the spirit of the dead, who must be propitiated by a mass of rice, left in the house for him. This, generally, is supposed to effect a cure.

§ It is curious that in one of their invocations, "mā Deyā", my God! [782] occurs, see before; and that of thunder they say, "a spirit, or a god has cried out".

197 recognize a single expression. The following morning I taxed
198 the people with speaking in Vedda language, but they stoutly
declared that they could only speak Sinhalese.

[177]
178 In my opinion the majority of the people of the Maha
Wedirata are of Vedda origin, but have discarded their
primitive customs as they dwindled in numbers, and while
other causes, such as marriage with neighbouring people,
tended to still further break down the older customs of the
isolated clans that made up the Vedda race as a whole, they
still cling in secret to the language of their forefathers, as a
binding link and a means of private communication.

115 At Selavai, in the Panawa Pattu, I found one family who
admitted that their grandfather was a real Vedda, belonging
to one of the clans occupying the country on the confines of
the Kumbukkan river.

From the oldest member of this family I obtained a mass
of information respecting the habits and customs of the Vedda
people.

614
[553] According to this individual, who has adopted the Sinhalese
name of Dissan Hany, the Veddas were divided up into a
number of waruge or clans, each of which occupied and
hunted over a specific area of country, and had no connection
with the others who lived as separate communities.

The members of each clan were more or less related, and
previous to the disintegration of the Veddas as a race, they
could not marry any but members of the same waruge.

[462] They lived by hunting, in which only the males took part.
Their habitations were caves, and occasionally leaf shelters,
but the latter was uncommon.

562
593 The females were kept in a state of rigid subjection to the
males, and could not take part in the chase, ordinary
ceremonials, or conversation with any but those who were
immediate relations, or the closest relatives of the husband.

562
593 If the husband was pleased to throw some meat to his wife,
as part of his spoil in the chase, that was all the woman was
entitled to. She could not claim a share simply because she
• 224 was the man's wife.

291 Under ordinary circumstances, both the males and females
324 were naked, assuming only for special occasions a loin cloth

165 the other hand, the mortality would be very considerable among the offspring. This mortality, when infantile, would generally be among the first born and last born, owing to maternal immaturity in the first case and constitutional depletion in the last.

842 On the question of sex I found that the prevalent idea was
913 that if a wife was not thoroughly obedient to her husband she would invariably give birth to females, and it was only complete subjection to the husband's will that could secure a preponderance of males.

I could get no information on the subject of barrenness or sterility.

776 As regards the religion of the Veddas previous to their
782 modernization, it appears that they believed in certain "Yakko," who exercised certain influences for good or evil. There was no conception of a Supreme Creator. On the other hand, the "Yakko" possessed, in common with humanity, a tendency to favour; so that it was always possible to secure its influence in return for special mollifying ceremonies. Thus, by certain incantations, ceremonial offerings, or honorific declarations, the Yakko who exercised specific powers could be induced to subvert influence to the advantage of the individual then desiring it. Thus, the Yakko who guarded the deer might be induced to direct the deer to come within the reach of the Vedda's bow and arrows. On the other hand, another Yakko might be propitiated so as to render the hunter invisible to the leopard, so that the hunter would escape harm.

789 Special incantations were supposed to render an individual
224 successful in the chase, so that his aim would be deadly, or that more game would come his way.

753 Again, disease or sickness was the direct outcome of certain
843 malign Yakko, who could be propitiated, and this was specially to be considered when a woman was pregnant, so that the evil might be diverted from the unborn child.

241 I was not able to discover from my informant if the Veddas in their primitive times had any definite form of agriculture. It is certain that they were acquainted with rice, but I could not ascertain how it was procured.

123 We had hardly gained the base of the rock when we heard human
 [411] voices and soon came up with three men and their dogs. One fellow
 [412] carried a gun, the others had axes hitched to their shoulders. They
 [412] were on their way to a devil dancing ceremony at a house of illness some
 miles away; but abandoning their project they accompanied us to their
 homes.

[621] In a small clearing stood half a dozen leafy shelters. Outside one of
 [342] these, three women with infants at the breast were seated roasting small
 yellow flowers. The rest of their people were at work on a *chena** close
 [162] by. We summoned them and soon we had all the Veddas of the *Kogaka*
 [162] *Ulpotta* before us—some six or eight men and about a dozen women and
 [162] children. They were a poor lot bearing the stigmata of malaria and
 [146] framboesia. There was but one old man among them. The children
 were emaciated and languid.

144 Most of them showed strong traces of Tamil admixture, especially
 177 the women; what poor ornaments they wore, their clothing, and even
 their very names were Tamil; and so were their predilections if the
 coy smiles one or two of them bestowed on the fine Tamil that accompanied
 us signified anything. There were at least three men, however, true to
 142 Vedda type—short of stature, wild-eyed, with beardless face and up-
 standing frizzly hair.

411 They had no bows among them, except as playthings for the children,
 524 but made us one as a memento and stained it with charcoal and
thimbiri to give it the appearance of use.

342 The huts were fashioned of wattle and leaves, and thatched with dry
 415 grass. Their domestic appointments comprised earthen pots, a wooden
 pestle and mortar, bark rope, and a deer skin or two.

262 Fruits, flowers, wild yams, honey, the flesh of animals, *kurukhant*
 and maize formed their food. The meat they fancied most was that of
 ● 224 the langur and monitor lizard which they hunted with the lazy mongrels
 231 that loitered about. They eat abundantly and at any hour when food
 264 is plentiful; but as a rule one good meal a day is all they expect; in
 times of dearth they bear hunger stoically, chewing incessantly a few
 261 varieties of bark they carry in pouches fashioned of cloth saturated with
 415 melted wax (*iter redhee*). Partial nomads, they spend many months
 221 of the year under trees and in caves. Where the *palu*, *veera*, *kong*, or
 222 *mora*† fruit is ripe, where the hives are, there they take their women and
 children, dogs, and chattels and go.

515 "How often do you bathe?" I asked one of them, the smell of their
 ring-wormed bodies suggesting little acquaintance with water.

"What bathing for us," he replied. "We fall into a stream once in a
 way and get out again; that is our bath. And we only do that when
 our stomachs are full. When we are hungry we don't care for anything;
 we can eat even a man then!"

804 In answer to the question how they measured distances and what
 [206] constituted a mile, the reply was, "We walk till our legs hurt, then we
 place our axes on the ground, sit down, take out our pouches, and chew
 a quid; that is our mile."

*A patch of forest cleared for cultivation

†*Eleusine coracana*

‡*Mimosa hexandra*, *Hemicyclia septaria*, *Schleichera trijuga*, *Nepenthes longana*,
 respectively.

FOREST CHILDREN

17

were loath to purchase their intimacy with gifts. Time enough for that, when we had won them over by less humiliating means. Besides, these Veddas were evidently spoilt, and we wished to show them they were not the important personages they imagined themselves to be. 123

"We are going then," said Handuna. It was now our turn for dejection. Was it for such an ungracious issue we had travelled so far?

I had a last card, having brought some neosalvarsan, a sovereign remedy for yaws so rife among these people. The offer was received with indifference. There was only one case among them, they said, and the patient was too ill to come. This being just what we wanted, I offered to visit them the next morning. [164]

"You cannot come where we live unless we allow you," said the irrepressible Kaira. "And we won't show you our caves or anything, unless you give us presents."

Sick with exasperation and disgust at the behaviour of these impossible children, I told them they could take our offer or leave it as they chose, and turned to other work. The result was a grudging acquiescence; and, leaving a guide behind, they went away.

A word of explanation regarding the sophistication of a people so remote. They were in fact about the purest-blooded Veddas extant; indeed, it was to this very circumstance they owed their disappointing behaviour; for it had attracted Seligmann among them. What that implied may well be imagined. To obtain the valuable sociological information with which his book abounds, he had gained the confidence of these folk with scrupulous consideration and kindness, showering on them gifts of all kinds. Moreover, the patient investigation of the most intimate details of their lives by such a man, heightened their self-esteem. Of this we had an amusing illustration. I was obliged to admonish a group of Sinhalese that embarrassed us with their attentions. A Vedda sidled up and, tapping me familiarly on the shoulder, whispered, "Those people don't like us, they are jealous of us. We and you gentlemen are one; they are different!" [156] [114] [127]

To dismiss these Veddas as spoilt uninteresting folk would imply failure to discern their innate simplicity, beneath the veneer of pose and importunity, for which contact with an indulgent stranger had been responsible. In their homes they still are as artless as their forbears were before ever white man set foot on these shores.

We were out hunting early that afternoon, when a sudden snapping sound arrested our attention. The Vedda we were with listened a few seconds. "Catching *lalageyas*," (monitor-lizards), he said laconically. The excited barking of a dog and rebuking human voices soon confirmed his conjecture. Going up, we found two men, one of whom carried a large quivering monitor just killed; while two dogs, still spirited with the chase, danced round their victim and growled and snapped at us. One of the men now set about to disjoint the quarry's tail at the middle, leaving it connected only by a tag of sinew; then, slitting the submandibular web, he rove the tail through till it locked at the division, making the reptile eat its own tail as it were, and carried it neatly in a loop. The monitor is best hunted at high noon; after four in the afternoon it takes to trees and holes. 224 • 231

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854



Handuna's household. (Page 18)

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224
411
482



Hennebedde Veddas (Page 16)



The iguana hunter. (Page 17)

[Facing p. 17]

30 and ear-rings and necklaces. Sober, wistful children ate raw melons or fragments of *kurrukken* cake as hard as brick, plastered over with flies.

25 Indian corn and *kurrukken*, the staple food of these people, are prepared in a variety of ways. After soaking in water for twenty-four hours, they are reduced to flour, *kurrukken* on grind-stones, maize with pestle and mortar, and eaten in one of three forms—*talapa*, *roti*, or *pithu* appetised with pungent sambols.

342 Let us look into one of their homes. It is windowless and dark, except for the light that comes between the bark-slats in a hundred dazzling shafts. There are two rooms; the inner small and narrow, the outer a larger living room with a single doorway protected by a two foot fence—a provision for the children. At one corner is a hearth underlying a low [25] [35] [41] [42] [43] [44] [45] [46] [47] [48] [49] [50] [51] [52] [53] [54] [55] [56] [57] [58] [59] [60] [61] [62] [63] [64] [65] [66] [67] [68] [69] [70] [71] [72] [73] [74] [75] [76] [77] [78] [79] [80] [81] [82] [83] [84] [85] [86] [87] [88] [89] [90] [91] [92] [93] [94] [95] [96] [97] [98] [99] [100] [101] [102] [103] [104] [105] [106] [107] [108] [109] [110] [111] [112] [113] [114] [115] [116] [117] [118] [119] [120] [121] [122] [123] [124] [125] [126] [127] [128] [129] [130] [131] [132] [133] [134] [135] [136] [137] [138] [139] [140] [141] [142] [143] [144] [145] [146] [147] [148] [149] [150] [151] [152] [153] [154] [155] [156] [157] [158] [159] [160] [161] [162] [163] [164] [165] [166] [167] [168] [169] [170] [171] [172] [173] [174] [175] [176] [177] [178] [179] [180] [181] [182] [183] [184] [185] [186] [187] [188] [189] [190] [191] [192] [193] [194] [195] [196] [197] [198] [199] [200] [201] [202] [203] [204] [205] [206] [207] 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342 These communal dwellings stockaded against beast aggression in the heart of wild nature, the watch huts on the trees, the hallos all night, 351 proclaim the incessant struggle between man and the animals in whose strong kingdom he is only a small unit. But for its inalienable hardships 000 the life of this people makes a homely appeal to the human heart. Nature a capricious giver, bestows now abundantly now sparingly, and he who would wrest a living from her must have supple thaws and great endurance.

172 Henanagalla was a place of antiquarian interest a few miles from Dolagalwella. On the summit of a large low rock in an undulating glade stood a broken dagaba completely obscured by a growth of big trees and scrub. Desultory worshippers had trussed up a slab for offerings of wild flowers. A low wall of hewn granite blocks surrounded the structure, and a half buried monolith or two peeped out of the ruin.

Descending from here and working round through a tangle of brush-wood, we came to a commodious cave quite forty paces long, showing the remains of enclosing and partitioning walls, a slotted stone for the support of a pillar and a large flat *pufa* stone.

224 Besides these evidences of ancient occupation, were signs of more recent use. The cave was obviously a resort of monitor hunters. There 252 were the long sticks with which the savoury creatures had been poked out of deep lairs, and cooking frames where they had been roasted. The floor was littered with their dry heads, corn-cobs and nut-shells.

172 But more interesting than all this were the crude drawings that adorned the inner dome. Here was a veritable gallery of untutored art, wrought with finger for brush and a mixture of ash and water for paint. There were the most primitive representations imaginable of leopards, elephants

THE MARAWEETHIYA

43

cries he had rushed in vain to the rescue. It speaks much for the dominance of man over animals that this puny fellow, armed only with a small hatchet, could live with impunity in such surroundings; and moreover leave his wife and children unprotected in their fragile leaf-hut while he was out in quest of food. 115
[412]
[342]

"Cha," I heard Sinna ruminating sorrowfully to himself, "the goose-catching dog is gone." [231]

"Have you no other?" I asked.

"The one that's left isn't much good," he said. "With the bitch I lost I could catch six *goyas** a day." [224]

The way to the caves was up the heavily-wooded, boulder-encumbered side of the hill, plentiful with caves of bear, porcupine and wild cat. On the sandy floor of one dark den were the footprints of a bear and her cubs that had just vacated it. Sinna was well ahead of us, as we clambered on trembling knees regardless of all else but where to gain foot-hold, when a timorous one called out to the Vedda from below, "There now, if a bear should come, don't you run away and climb a tree." 13

The little chap wagged his head acquiescingly. I asked him what he would do in such an event.

"We will also strike; he will also bite," was the cool reply.

Gaining a spur, at length we attained the first of the series of caves known as the Maraweethiya. A strong aroma of bats greeted us. Ant-hills grew out of the dusty floor of the cave, the plastered dome of which was ornamented with frescoes of Buddhas and *devas*. A decayed wooden image stood behind a flat altar stone supported on bricks, many of which lay fallen about. A broken wall partially shut in the cave, and another divided it off from a deep pool of crystalline water. [172]

From here a passage protected by a low wall led through a narrow gully flanked by small trees; thence by way of spurs, tunnels and deep grottoes we came to a shallow cave in full face of the sky, where we were the cause of much concern to a pair of peregrine falcons. They hovered above us crying perturbedly; now they would swoop boldly down almost within reach of our hands; now wing away with harsh cackling cries of alarm, as they discovered us handling their eggs, that lay amidst the debris of brick and tile.

Ahead was a fearsome pass, which we must negotiate to reach the last of the caves. It was no more than a shallow, sloping notch in the sheer side of the rock, overlooking a drop of about three hundred feet, and with seemingly nothing beyond it but eternity. On hands and knees we crawled through and were mightily relieved to find ourselves in the security of a large grotto. Here, before two patched stone images, we found a few of our carriers devoutly kneeling; on an altar-stone were their meagre oblations of ixora blooms they had gathered on the way. The virtue, it would seem, lay less in the quality of the offerings than in the attainment of this inhospitable shrine with its weathered and lonely gods. [178]
[182]

We could go no farther; but hence along the crazy edge of the hill was the merest semblance of a break-neck way that led, we were told, to the ancient kingdom of the *rakshayas* (demons) with its foot-wide

[36] to a cleft fragment of stone resembling a giant lizard crawling up the
[103] sheer face of the rock.

[241] We found Bowala deserted. The young coconut and areca palms, plantains, sugar-canes and pine-apples there were choked with grass and lantana. The huts were falling to pieces and leaked like sieves as we found to our cost when a shower overtook us; the grass thatch, ruined [136] by white ants, was the home of innumerable rats, brahmin-lizards and poisonous *karawalas** that hung head-down from the rafters ready to strike.

221 The desolate state of the hamlet is explainable by the *chena* life of the people. In December, as the crops ripen, they forsake their homes for the shacks of the *chena*, leaving perhaps an aged couple behind. In April, when the crops of *kurrukhan* and maize have been taken, they return to the village to repair their huts and wean back to life such plants as have survived the inroads of wild animals and weeds. In July, *chena* land is leased again; and so the wasteful routine is repeated. 621 A hamlet occupied for six months and abandoned for six has not much chance of headway. If the population of a village is at all numerous, there are sufficient people to occupy both *chena* and village, without detriment to either; if the community is very small they remain *chena* dwellers with no permanent homes; if intermediate, we find the state of things at Bowala. In favoured places a mere nucleus of human beings swells in time to a thriving and populous village. But in the insalubrious *Vanni* privation and ignorance keep the numbers low. Two dwindling villages may combine to save one from extinction. Often a place populous to-day is a wilderness to-morrow and *vice versa*. This is typical of the kaleidoscopic way the forest hamlets change. Names so fine on maps—Illukpitiya, Mahaella, Embillene—are found when reached to be derelict; a crumbling hut perhaps hidden in jungle, or a hardy tamarind or palmyrah the sole witness of vanished homes.

101 Bowala folk are better jungle men than many farther inland. Though far from fastidious in their choice of meats, for they eat the mongoose and rat, they abhor the porcupine, sure mark of Vedda ancestry. They [262] fashion bags of beaten *riti* bark and carry pouches of monkey skin that [287] ladies might envy. Their bed-frames are spanned with sambur-hide, [28] their powder flasks are the dried scrota of sambur. A monkey skin, 415 stretched over a coconut shell fitted with handle, screw and string, [534] manipulated with a small bow, serves them as a violin out of which they scrape mournful disharmonies. They snare the smaller animals, such as 224 the hare, pangolin and chevrotan, with *habbakas* or weighted frames [222] poised over passages used by these animals; we saw one of these set for chevrotan with a bundle of urine-drenched leaves for bait. Some among 481 them could brave the formidable heights of Westminster Abbey in quest of the combs of the rock bee—the most hazardous of jungle pursuits.

000 We spent the night in a large cave at the base of Westminster Abbey and made the ascent next morning, replenishing our water bottles at a small basin formed by the buttressing roots of a rock-tamarind and rejoicing in the grandiloquent name, for so trivial a thing, of *Kothuru-pathaka* (gnat-water-hole).

It had rained all night and there was still a drizzle. Squeezing through crevices, crouching through low caves, climbing trees, clinging to rough

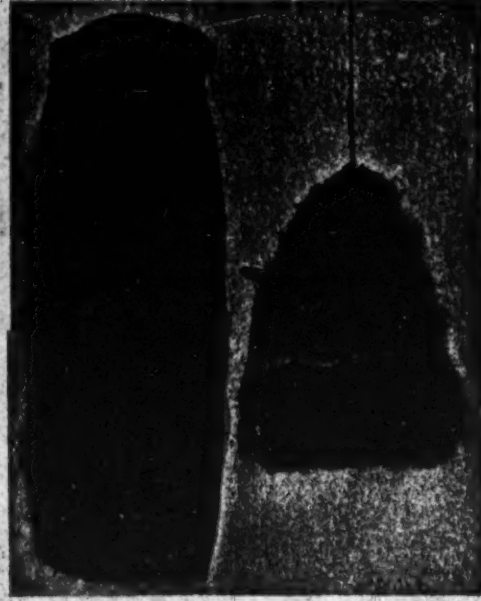
*Small venomous snakes.



The dancers of Bowala. (Page 48)



//abbah, a weighted frame-work for trapping animals. (Page 48)



Bag made of threshed rih bark and monkey skin pouch.
(Page 48)

[Facing p. 49]

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114 Even a Vedda child should be able to pick its way through the jungle
487 with no mark to guide it."

361 We had travelled thus a long while, and for all I knew had lost all
342 trace of the Veddas, when we struck a stream where the foot-prints of
114 a man and a dog were evident. Soon we were climbing up to Dhik-galge,
to find, alas! that not only was it deserted, but that no Veddas had been
near it for many a long day. The Veddas had lied to the Chetty!

The cave we found ourselves in was a magnificent one—long, spacious and open to the sky, with tall straight trees towering before it. Below, a stream babbled over rocks, making delightful bathing pools. Around, was the tenderest music of birds. It was a romantic spot, specially designed, as it were, by Nature for the jungle-dweller. The dome of the cave was covered with crude drawings. A broken pot had been put in a niche. There were fragments of filthy rag, a large cooking frame and dry leaves which had long previously been slept upon. The rocky floor was smooth in places where *kurrukhan* had been rubbed to flour with flat worn stones, and cupped where maize had been pounded. The *aratchi* of Paragahakelle had spoken true. A handful of moss, peeping from a crevice, revealed, when disturbed, a couple of fledglings. Our first thought was that they were young swiftlets, left there to die by ruthless nest-hunters; but they flew too strongly for that; and soon, the piteous cries of the parent birds told us that we had inadvertently rifled a fly-catcher's nest.

114 It was mid-day, and, being very tired, we sat down to a meal; I to camp-pie and chocolate, the others to raw cassava. Our hunger abated, I reminded our guides that my offer of a reward still stood, and that he would get it, who brought me up with even one of those Veddas wherever he might be. Asking us to stay where we were, Meenemaruwa and the half-Vedda of Galmede vanished into the jungle.

The better part of an hour must have elapsed when we heard the latter calling to us excitedly. He said that Meenemaruwa was in hot pursuit of the Veddas who, to judge by their traces, were making away at great speed, evidently scared by the sight of my shoe-prints.

222 Following at a run, we eventually came upon them—a wild, swarthy
● 224 group of two men and two boys, freighted with the spoils of the chase;
482 each with his sackful of edible bird's nests, dried sambur meat and
142 *bambara* honey; the leaders with two old muzzle-loaders. May the
609 picture not fade. Suthubanda was there, and the youth Badapissa as
our sleuths had told us. But the figure that arrested my fancy most
was a wild, fiery-eyed, shaggy-haired fellow of twenty-five—an ebon Apollo. Gama he was called because he was born on a journey (*gamana*). To his waist was attached the inflated bladder of the sambur they had killed. Nor did his looks belie his character, for, even as we came up, he flared into foul-mouthed fury at a tired, inoffensive boy of their company.

[578]

They were delighted with the tobacco and betel we shared out to them, and gave us honey in return. Money they refused. When we asked them how it was that they had not been in Dhik-galge as they had said they were, their only answer was a hearty laugh!

600 It was hail and farewell! for the hour was past noon, and the Veddas had many miles to make before nightfall; so had we. But those shadows of the spangled forest were soon to call me again.

CHAPTER VI

VEDDAS OF BINGODA

I. BINGODA HOMES

*Innumerable years had flown,
Since first the chisel in her hand
Necessity, the sculptor, took,
And in her spacious meaning planned
These forms, and that eternal look.*

L. BINYON

[197] CONCEDE me three points and I shall attempt to show that there exist
[101] in Ceylon to-day Veddas worthy of the name. Language, apparel and weapons are the concessions I ask.

Let us begin by confessing, that the Veddas we shall tell of have no pure language of their own, but merely a patois, in which Sinhalese words predominate and Vedda words are few; their clothing is not the traditional leaf or threshed *riri* bark, but fragments of foul rag affording, if anything, less cover; the weapons they favour are guns (of a type almost as dangerous to user as to quarry) and not bows and arrows which they employ only in sore necessity.

Vital issues, you will say, which should deprive this people of their name. But language, dress and arms may change without materially altering, for a time at least, ancient customs and primeval instincts.

[101] The word Vedda originally meant hunter; and a people supreme in jungle-craft, always capable of gleaning from the unfriendly forests a sufficiency for their needs and utterly incompetent to husband even the primitive agriculture of the *chena*, has surely a claim to the name.

224 It must not be supposed that every Vedda possesses a gun; far from it; occasionally there may be a single weapon to a whole clan. The usual
[417] thing is for the Sinhalese or Moors to lend their guns to these superb
[427] trackers, who never waste a shot and seldom return without their quarry, a large share of which goes by agreement to the owner of the gun.

114 Of my first accidental meeting with these Veddas amid the hills of Galmede, I have already told. Barely four months had elapsed before I found myself renewing their acquaintance; this time with set purpose.

Arriving at the forest village of Mullegama, sacred to Buddhists, and abounding in lime groves and Moors, I was fortunate enough to run up against my friend Kaurala of Kottelinde, who, so difficult of acquisition before, now became our willing guide.

[131] Bingoda, the home of our Veddas, is some three miles from Mullegama, and lies on the Dhungolla Oya, a tributary of the Magalavatan Aar which connects Bingoda with Galmede ten miles away—all in the circuit of

[p.64]

535 to all the spirits combined. Suddenly he stooped, twirled the chatty
796 on the ground, and shouting "hooy", fell swooning into the arms of one
who had for some time been waiting to catch him. The dance was over.
He was artist enough to impart something of his wild fervour to his
spectators.

● 224 The next day at the appointed hour we set out, the Veddas buoyed up
with the certainty of success. We had not gone far when Kaurala, who
was leading, suddenly levelled his gun (or rather mine) and fired. A fine
buck bounded away.

"Cha", he said, examining the spot where the animal had stood;
"now why did that animal not fall? So close too. That was the *kiri-
koraka* deer right enough; did you not see the horns?" When he dis-
covered that he had fired the barrel containing small shot and not the
bullet, he fell to cursing my gun.

782 Should an animal be killed after a *kirikoraka* ceremony an offering of
224 boiled rice, with flesh from the head and chest, is made to the propitious
spirits. Of this offering the hunters may themselves partake with a view
to continuance of success.

VEDDA JUNGLES

81

In their inhospitable forests, the most wild and arid in the Island, where food is scarce and only attained with great hardship, the Vedda is king. His lifelong apprenticeship to the harsh conditions fits him superbly to the mercile task. He knows season and place and is sensitive to the slightest clue. How ill-fitted for this life are we of the towns who would starve by a tree with a honey-comb or with a succulent yam under foot. They make us feel like children, in that environment, these admirable Crichtons of the jungle, and our urban refinements as dross compared with their simple skill and hardihood. 311

It is truly a delight to travel with the Vedda and watch his ways. Moving silently, speaking no word except to "hum" an animal call to attract each other's attention, they allow nothing to escape them, and read the ground like a book, indicating spoor where you see nothing. Becoming sceptical of such claims I thought I would test the skill of Suthu Banda, also known as Porumola. Telling him to turn his face away, I tip-toed lightly on the bed of leaf that carpeted our path, and asked him to indicate my foot-prints. 151 224

"Here they are, and here," he said without a moment's hesitation. "Why, it's easy; don't you see the leaves turned?" (I certainly did not, demonstrate as hard as he might). "What is the difficulty for us to see a human foot-print here," he continued, "who have to follow a mouse-deer's trail on ground that shows less than this."

We had halted by a tree of great height and enormous girth, branchless for quite forty feet from the ground—as awkward a proposition for a climber as one could wish. I asked Suthu Banda whether he could climb it. "Why not," he said; and, without so much as putting down the axe hitched to his shoulder, he mounted the rock beside which the tree stood, and looked up a second or two. Then, shinning up an adjacent sapling that shot high, swung on to the slender extremity of the big tree's lowermost branch that sagged under his weight, and moved along with a carelessness painful to watch. He was soon among boughs no bigger than a man's wrist, and from the dizzy height wished to know whether we wanted him to go higher! None of your artificial aids, such as loops, for the Vedda; he is a veritable quadrumana, with feet as prehensile as hands. 481

They have a sure method of killing sambur. In the rainy months, and also, more rarely, in the drought, these animals climb to the tops of solitary hills. The Vedda, always watchful for the opportunity, is quick to detect this by the spoor. Cautiously attaining the summit, one or two of them guard with guns the only path by which the sambur must 224

Yams, chillies and melons survive a few months longer. After one to one and a half years the *chawa* is abandoned as worthless, and a fresh acreage leased; for *kurakkas* especially, is reputed to take such heavy toll of the soil, that this must be allowed to lie fallow for some ten or twelve years before being fit for recultivation! A terrible consumption of forest land results, unless controlled; harmless enough where a few families exist in vast forests; but sadly devastating in places at all populous. [241]

Irrigation, as these people know it, is solely what heaven bestows. Water may lie to hand but is not seriously utilized. A drought brings ruin, and scatters the folk far in quest of food. It is time a more economic system of agriculture was introduced to the Vanni, and the people taught, by the institution of model *chawas*, at least the value of forest leaf mould as a manure, and the advantages of some simple system of irrigation from available streams or wells, such as the Tamils of Jaffna and the Moors of the Eastern Province exploit so well.

224 descend; while two or three others, with perhaps a dog, beat the jungle above and start the animal, which is shot almost at the point of the guns.

262 There is no flesh the Vedda loves more than that of the wanderoo
224 (grey langur). He will sometimes be seen to halt by a tree, and strike its trunk three resounding blows with his axe-head. This is to discover the whereabouts of the wanderoo. On hearing the sound, these animals, imagining it to be that of a falling tree or rock, give vent to the "a-he-hik" so characteristic of them when startled.

252 One afternoon Suthu Banda brought in a great langur along on his
[482] shoulder, with its tail rove through its slit cheek. Within twenty-five minutes not a morsel of the animal remained. Disjointing the tail at the root, he dissected up a strip of dorsal skin in continuation of it as far as the neck; twisting this over a branch, he suspended and rapidly skinned the quarry. The meat was cut up in pieces and placed on large logs over a fire, the flames licking them all round. Bony segments, such as the spine, ribs and limbs, were pounded on a stone when half burnt, and then replaced on embers. The stomach and entrails were slit open and their contents merely scooped away with the fingers, and roasted. No water whatever was used! It was a truly sickening sight to see the relish with which the intestines with adherent faecal matter were greedily eaten. When we remarked on the repulsiveness of it, the gluttonous epicure calmly remarked, "Yes, the filth gets eaten right enough. What of it? It is good medicine. If you get a wanderoo what haven't you got? No marriage is like it." How true is the saying that the pig and the Vedda are one!

226 Fish* abound in the forest streams, all bony and very indifferent
824 to the taste. The Veddass catch these, not with rods or nets, but with poisons. The fruit, bark or root of certain trees† is smashed up and thrown into pools or banked waterways. The water is then stirred; as it gets stained the fish become restless, and leap on to the bank, or turn belly upwards stupefied. They are collected and boiled with a little salt and a few chillies and eaten at once, or dried over a trestle like meat.

[251] Let us see what sort of fare the jungle trees provide. Of fruit there is
222 plenty in season:—*Mora*, *kong*, *galseembela*, *veera*, *palu*, *damba*, *jak*, *guavas*, *ulkantha*, *hibutoo*, *bilanga*, *kolhalanga*, *leyaneyya*, *karambe*, *madu* never eaten raw because it causes giddiness and vomiting!). The cabbages of palms such as *inthibada* and *kitulalla*. Yams:—*Gonala*, *katuala*, *hirathala*, *alalla*, in order of preference. Then there are the various barks they chew incessantly to stay the hunger of their long fasts:—*Demata*, *bolvilla* and *thambola*, all substitutes for betel; and *davata* for arecanut; and besides these the barks of *opulu*, *galseembela*, *mora*, *habatha*, *nuga*, *kalawa*, *galkara*, and in fact anything, however, insipid, provided it is not poisonous.

757 Their medicines are few. There is *gonkuttudalu* which they crush up
752 with water and apply to the head for headaches; *meelalla-pothu* which they smash up with *chunam* and use as a dressing for wounds; but for abrasions of the foot they will as soon rub in a little sand with

* *Walapotho*, *anguluo*, *lulo*, *katukanao*, *kanupatho*, *anho* (eel), *maguro*, *hunge*, *keheliyo*, *pethy*, *walikhondo*, *sethalu*, *badapathalo*, *walihairiyo*, *piniweliyo*, *havalayo*, *galpanduruo*.

† *Kukurumang-gedde*, *halu-mul*, *thimbiri-gedde*, *dhamba-pothu*, *pussal-mul*.

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An ape for dinner. (Page 82)

342



Alu-galge, a Vedda cave. (Page 84)

[Facing p. 86]

BINTENNE

95

interfusion of Vedda blood—the apathetic look, the scanty beard, were unmistakably there. The area we had to traverse was not extensive, hemmed in, as it was, by the Bibile-Maha Oya road on the one hand and Mahaweli on the other. It is five miles from Alutnuwara to Arawatta; six miles from that to the Ulhitiya Oya; thence seven to Beligalla which is within four to six miles of Bulugahadena and Dambana, the Vedda haunts of to-day. The going is through forest comparatively well peopled; and *chenas* are frequently met with; changing from year to year, these often absorb the path and obliterate it, causing deviations which lead astray even guides conversant with the country a few months previously. 131

We were nearing Bulugahadena when we met our first Vedda of these parts—a tall, picturesque fellow with ear-rings, shouldering his bow-stave with a small gourdful of honey slung on its end. Unspoilt, reserved and natural, in contrast to his fellows whom we afterwards met, he was the finest Vedda we saw in Bintenne. [30] [157]

In an environment, not of virgin forest, but of derelict *chenas* we found the Veddas of Bulugahadena. They lived scattered about, a hut or two to each *chena*, and not in groups as one so often sees; the explanation we were given for this was not the obvious one that *chenas* were apparently easier of acquisition here than elsewhere, but that it served to keep the families apart and prevent social entanglements, Veddas being very jealous of their women. [30] [626] [152]

There was no reserve about these people. As we approached each hut, the men, armed with axes, bows and arrows, came out and greeted us vociferously in the Vedda language; Sinhalese they affected not to know. Their women were mostly sullen and silent; but one at least gave us a better reception than her husband did. Here and there a sickly wretch craved for medicine. 576 [41]

Their huts, made of bark slats and wattle, were too well built for Vedda habitations; they had not that crudity and unkemptness so characteristic of the huts of the wilder Veddas, and most of them were finished off with a neat fence-work. There was no lack of *kurrukhan* and maize here; and on the whole they seemed a fairly prosperous and contented community. 342 [241]

The Veddas of Dambana, who lived four miles away, were much the same as those of Bulugahadena; and so were the others we met scattered about these jungles. One lot we found picturesquely grouped in a rock-shelter, reproducing to perfection the old cave life; but they were obviously there for our benefit! 101 [261]

Of these Veddas, considered as a whole, we may say that we had never before seen so many of them as on this short trip of barely a week. On previous journeys, after having traversed miles and miles of jungle, we had met only a Vedda here and a Vedda there, never more than a dozen in all, often but one or two. But in Bintenne we saw no less than about fifty good specimens. Though they were obviously sophisticated by their nearness to Badulla and the many occasions on which their representatives had been on show, Vedda blood is still strong in Bintenne. This is the place to come to if one wishes to pick up the few words that are left of the Vedda language, and the art of making bows and arrows; but apart from that, these people are too civilised to be interesting. 161 [177]

One episode we experienced here is worth recalling. Two Veddas, better disposed towards us than the rest, one with his lip all askew from 224

224 a bear-bite, came one afternoon with two dogs and suggested a monitor hunt.

After having walked aimlessly through the jungle for the better part of an hour, we got impatient, and asked the Veddas what manner of hunt was this, and of what breed were their useless mongrels? They replied, and with justice, that the jungle was none of their choosing, and that there were no goas about for their dogs to scent them, as any one could see from the lack of traces. Once within the jungle, we had expected the dogs to shake off their lethargy and nose about at every scent. Not so these beasts, they hung on the heels of their masters, the least enthusiastic of the company. However, our remarks put the men on their mettle and, walking ahead, they tried to set their dogs to; one of them actually whistling and snapping his fingers after the manner of us in towns!

We had given up all hope of even seeing a monitor when suddenly there was a rustle in front of us, and a Vedda and his dog shot forward. We followed to find the Vedda gazing helplessly at a hole high up in the trunk of a tall tree, and his cur, its enthusiasm already wilted, lying contentedly with closed eyes, as if nothing was further from his thoughts than lizards in general and this one in particular.

224 The tree up which the reptile had sought refuge was quite four feet
313 in diameter. The Vedda was not long in doubt as to how he should act. Walking round the tree he tapped it with the head of his axe, and, finding it reasonably hollow, what should he do but proceed to fell it with that toy axe of his the cutting edge of which was no more than one and a half inches! So astonished were we at this that we settled down to a smoke, and watched.

After almost two hours of arduous toil, the great tree groaned and bore slowly down through thwarting lianas and the boughs of its huddled neighbours. It hesitated in its fall and then, despite ominous cracklings, remained poised aslant. A half hour more, and a supporting tree of no small girth was sacrificed with many an obscene curse; then another, and another tree; and finally the giant fell.

But what of the monitor? There was not the least sign of him. The dogs, roused to expectation by the falling tree, had already resumed their repose. The Veddas, to their chagrin, discovered by tapping the trunk that its whole length was hollow. They hewed an opening into it some feet away from the entrance hole; and then with long sticks vainly tried to poke the reptile out. Two more windows were made, and much more prodding done before, with the onset of dark, the project was abandoned as hopeless. "Why not have smoked the animal out?" you will ask; we did suggest it, only to learn that, while it would answer for the pangolin, it was useless for the monitor which tenacious creature will rather die suffocated in its lair than emerge to fall a victim to axe or canine jaw. That little beast certainly had the laugh of us!

This incident demonstrates well how wasteful of forest vegetation Veddas are. Often one sees great trees—even satin or ebony—felled across the path, only to find on inspecting them that they were sacrificed for a parrot's nest or a honey-comb! Be the crime what it may in the eyes of the law, it required a demonstration such as this to inspire us with respect for the toy-like axe the Vedda carries on his shoulder, and the stamina of his stringy arm.

[pp. 97-110 not processed]